Voting is fucking lame, entertaining avenues for "change" provided by the State is ontologically not anarchist. It is a pointless waste of your time at best and potentially disatrous at worst. We love this piece, and we hope you do too. We hope that this publication resonates with some folks. If it pisses you off, well all we can do is give you the zine.

Why You Shouldn't Vote

Some Anarchist Positions Against Voting

First published on berkmananarchy.noblogs.org
Printed by Evil Wizard Distro
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I'm willing to admit a man is a genuine socialist when he gives up his time and his energy, his money and his ability, exposes himself to imprisonment and victimisation, just to fight corruption and capitalism. But these M.P.'s of yours are only professing socialists, running with the hare and hunting with the hounds, on par with the professing Christians, who preach loving kindness and are the worst swindlers of the lot!" (Malatesta, Vote? What For?)

"Once elected representatives are isolated from the general public but surrounded by bureaucrats and other politicians. They therefore have a tendency to see things from the perspective of politicians and bureaucrats, rather than from the perspective of the general public from which they are isolated, and are much more susceptible to pressure from government bureaucracies…The socialist/social democratic/labor parties in Europe were originally revolutionary Marxist parties aiming to establish a communist society. As they won elections and gained power they increasingly abandoned this goal and became ordinary capitalist parties." (Morpheus, Elections are a Scam)

Other references

- theanarchistlibrary.org/search?query=voting
- Merlino-Malatesta debate: antorcha.net/biblioteca_virtual/politica/elecciones_y_anarquismo/indice.html
- theanarchistlibrary.org/library/crimethinc-voting-vs-direct-action

Voting in Liberal Democracy: Legitimizing Domination

George W. Bush (or Clinton, or Obama, or whoever) invades Iraq. He installs a puppet government and sets up elections. He creates political parties. Iraqis are told to vote.

Is this what they should do? Should they accept what has been imposed on them? Should they accept that someone can dictate how their lives are lived? That not only they should be governed, but by a specific governance mechanism determined by someone else? Should they accept that they are given a "choice" between various parties within the confines of that mechanism?

Now, what if some nation or aliens or whatever came and militarily slaughtered your society and then told you that they are going to create a government and you should vote. Would you do it then?

No!

It's obvious that the Iraqi people should tell Bush to fuck off. It's obvious that you should give the aliens the boot. *It's obvious that there is nothing in voting except capitulating to being ruled.*

Fuck their government!

Voting is a fucking joke. Some powerful group won a battle for supremacy and the prize was "government." Now they want you to agree that they won the prize, they want you to legitimize their reign by voting.

The only difference between the Iraq/alien examples and what we have in liberal democracy is that we can't see how government is forced on us because we are indoctrinated from birth to believe that *we want and need to be governed.*

Because we supposedly participate in being governed by voting we consent to the process and outcomes. Government seems to come from within us, from among the people in our country, from something that we've demanded, and not from some exter-

nal power imposed on us. But that's just not the case: We have not asked to be governed, and we have just as much affiliation with the powers that determine the composition of political parties as Iraqi's have in Bush's scheme.

Some will try to convince you that voting can bring about the world we wish to see, or at the very least can avoid a world that is worse than this one. Below is a catalogue of perspectives, with references to anarchist literature, that aims to dispel this sense of legitimacy of voting in liberal democracy. This is not a complete list of anarchist positions against voting. Anarchists do not necessarily subscribe to all, or even any, of these positions, because anarchists are not a homogenous mass.

Note: Many of these positions also apply to voting in collective decision-making contexts outside of government.

Serious Positions Against Voting

Voting is dangerous

There might be a bomb at the voting booth, because we put it there.

Voting is cringe

It does not please me. It's boring. It's lame. I'd rather be in the goon cave.

Voting is pointless

We'll assassinate all the politicians anyway.

just joking right? haha. now for the super serious positions against voting

Power corrupts even the best.

Even the most genuine politician, or most trustworthy political party, becomes corrupted by the political process. They come to see themselves as better, superior, more important than those who elected them. To retain their position, they learn to play the game, cater to the wealthy, orient toward the socially and economically powerful, go with what is popular. They must compromise, not speak too ardently, not take strong positions.

"Nothing is more dangerous for man's private morality than the habit of command. The best man, the most intelligent, disinterested, generous, pure, will infallibly and always be spoiled at this trade. Two sentiments inherent in power never fail to produce this demoralisation; they are: contempt for the masses and the overestimation of one's own merits." (Bakunin, Power Corrupts the Best)

"That's just it! And on top of that you have to make election promises you know you can't keep. And then you have to stand in with the Government, and mix with the well-to-do, and all the rest of it. As soon as any of your men are elected they have to kowtow to the people you admit are the opponents of the workers. So why the hell talk about propaganda when the first thing you do is to counteract propaganda?…It's these rascals who hoodwink the whole of their followers – worse even than the church can do. As soon as socialists, who have perhaps been persecuted like criminals when they were out of office (like Ramsay MacDonald was) get appreciated and estimated by the rich, and shake hands with Royalty, they're won over. When they do run foul of the Government, it's always with kid gloves – they know they're all pals together. They all sit together smugly in the smoking-room the best of friends – you can't imagine them getting too rough even in the debating chamber – and you're the devil of a long way from seeing them having their heads bashed in by the police as they used to get in the old days…As soon as you send someone to office they turn traitor. They mix with the rich, and want to keep up with them.

when it comes to imposing anti-working class action upon us, (as we shall show on in this essay the state has a corrupting effect on those who enter politics with high principles). There should be a better way, and we say the dismantling of government, in all of its existing and potential forms is that way." (Aotearoa Workers Solidarity Movement Urcuchillay, Why We Don't Vote)

"In the mid-twentieth century welfare states expanded in most Western societies as a way of preventing the then large revolutionary socialist movements from overthrowing the government (welfare programs can make the poor less likely to rebel since they are better off and because it makes the state seem more benevolent). The welfare state was in the elites' interests because it was a way to prevent revolution and decrease unrest, which helped them gain and keep power & profit. The state bureaucracy will sometimes nationalize a limited amount of industry under these conditions, as a way of preventing revolution and also of keeping capitalism going (selling unprofitable industries to the government can be a useful way for businesses & investors to recoup loses during a depression)..."Influence actually goes the other way around: having a Democrat in office makes the left more likely to believe the president's lies and go along with his policies than if a Republican were in office doing the same thing. Clinton was able to gut welfare, something Reagan wanted to do but couldn't, because he was able to co-opt other Democrats into going along with it. Had a Republican done the same many more would have opposed it. When Clinton attacked Yugoslavia & bombed Iraq the response from the left was quite small, but when Bush attacked Iraq the left formed a much larger movement against it. Many leftists (erroneously) think that a Democrat is preferable to a Republican and so are willing to give a Democrat the benefit of the doubt, and therefore are more likely to believe their lies, but will be much more skeptical of a Republican even if he does the same thing."" (Morpheus, Elections are a Scam)

Super Serious Positions Against Voting

You can't do everything

If you believe in voting, then you should want your candidates to win. Are you going to spend time trying to get people elected (canvassing, organizing, running for office), watching the polls, being enrapt in the sports-like competition spectacle between the two business parties before, during, and after the election, or are you going to spend time on projects that don't depend on the outcome of an election (direct action, mutual aid, etc.)?

Voting transforms the voter (praxis)

Engaging in representational politics (voting) transforms the voter. It changes the voter's consciousness to believe in governance and its hierarchical social relations. Voting prevents the voter from developing capacities outside the political, the skills and social relationships needed to flourish without government. Rather than engaging directly with their lives, their friends, new autonomous projects, voting gets people to expect the government to do things for them. Voting weakens, disempowers, and disarms the voter, and reinforces social and economic relationships suitable to being governed.

Unity of means and ends

Using the state (voting) to achieve a society without government will strengthen, rather than weaken, government.

Policy is not morality

If you are a moralist, you should do what is morally correct regardless of what a government says. This makes the outcome of the election, and in turn voting, irrelevant: If the outcome fits what

I consider moral, then government will do what I would be doing anyway, and if it does not, then government merely stands in the way of what I will do. To do otherwise, to vote and sit on one's hands, is to treat the most important moral questions as games of chance.

Voting consents to entrenchment and consolidation of power

Voting consents to placing power in the hands of a minority of the powerful and opulent through their representatives in government. When they do things you don't like, who are you to disagree? You consented to being dominated by them.

Voting requires waiting and hoping

You wait for the elections to roll around, even though things are urgent. You vote, then you wait to see who is elected, then you wait for them to come into office, then you hope that they will pass the laws that you want. If things don't work out, you wait for the next election, and repeat the process.

Harm reduction is harmful

Voting as harm reduction does more harm than good. Accepting reforms through voting makes people settle for a partial goal; it is a concession. From this position of compromise, the state entrenches its position, and it becomes more difficult to push further, for voters fear losing their partial gains. Accepting harm reduction also divides the movement, because some will be satisfied with the crumbs, while others want it all (see the split at the ZAD). Harm reduction also assumes that the harm (the government) cannot be removed entirely, which is an argument that there can be no anarchy.

hetero-patriarchy, or capitalism. Voting is not a strategy for decolonization. The entire process that arrived at the "Native vote" was an imposition of U.S. political identity on Indigenous Peoples fueled by white supremacy and facilitated by capitalism…U.S. assimilation policies were not designed as a benevolent form of harm reduction, they were an extension of a military strategy that couldn't fulfill its genocidal programs. Citizenship was forced onto Indigenous Peoples as part of colonial strategy to, "Kill the Indian and save the man…Perhaps one of the clearest illustrations of assimilationist strategies regarding citizenship and voting comes from Henry S. Pancoast, one of the founders of the Christian white supremacist group, the Indian Rights Association (IRA). Pancoast stated, "Nothing [besides United States Citizenship] will so tend to assimilate the Indian and break up his narrow tribal allegiance, as making him feel that he has a distinct right and voice in the white man's nation…Lucy Parsons, an Afro-Indigenous anarchist was among many who critiqued suffrage at the time. Parsons wrote in 1905, "Can you blame an Anarchist who declares that man-made laws are not sacred?…The fact is money and not votes is what rules the people. And the capitalists no longer care to buy the voters, they simply buy the 'servants' after they have been elected to 'serve.' The idea that the poor man's vote amounts to anything is the veriest delusion.The ballot is only the paper veil that hides the tricks." (Indigenous Action, Voting is Not Harm Reduction)

"Voting attempts to provide the population with the illusion of change while in reality it reinforces the current system. A policy here and there may change, the faces may change, but the system of a wealthy minority ruling a poorer majority remains. People are continually telling us that abstaining from voting will help the right-wing win the election, that it is better if the lesser evil wins. This may possibly be the case (although we remain to be convinced), but why should we base our society on a compromise with evil? In fact the progressive left wing party you vote for will often be ready to take the same actions as a right wing government

liberals, and progressives, and leftists didn't get what they want, where the harm was supposedly greater, than under Biden, where those same people lie dormant, accepting the lesser evil world as a blessed reprieve.

"When proclamations are made that "voting is harm reduction," it's never clear how less harm is actually calculated. Do we compare how many millions of undocumented Indigenous Peoples have been deported? Do we add up what political party conducted more drone strikes? Or who had the highest military budget? Do we factor in pipelines, mines, dams, sacred sites desecration? Do we balance incarceration rates? Do we compare sexual violence statistics? Is it in the massive budgets of politicians who spend hundreds of millions of dollars competing for votes? Though there are some political distinctions between the two prominent parties in the so-called U.S., they all pledge their allegiance to the same flag. Red or blue, they're both still stripes on a rag waving over stolen lands that comprise a country built by stolen lives. We don't dismiss the reality that, on the scale of U.S. settler colonial violence, even the slightest degree of harm can mean life or death for those most vulnerable. What we assert here is that the entire notion of "voting as harm reduction" obscures and perpetuates settler-colonial violence, there is nothing "less harmful" about it, and there are more effective ways to intervene in its violences…Voting as harm reduction imposes a false solidarity upon those identified to be most vulnerable to harmful political policies and actions. In practice it plays out as paternalistic identity politicking as liberals work to identify the least dangerous candidates and rally to support their campaigns. The logic of voting as harm reduction asserts that whoever is facing the most harm will gain the most protection by the least dangerous denominator in a violently authoritarian system…Under colonial occupation all power operates through violence. There is absolutely nothing "less harmful" about participating in and perpetuating the political power of occupying forces. Voting won't undue settler colonialism, white supremacy,

Voting reinforces false interdependence

Why should I have a say over what others do, particularly hundreds of millions of people who I will never meet? And why should those people have a say over what I do? There's both an implied authority over others and implied duty to others that comes with voting. Most people would not actively consent to these authorities and duties if they were made explicit. The way these authorities and duties are administered is through a collective decision-making state apparatus rather than direct interpersonal contact, alienating people from real interdependence, which requires interaction. If we can't agree, we should not affiliate, rather than just going along with what others want. Forced collective decision-making, subjecting oneself to the tyranny of the majority or consensus, inhibits this autonomy.

Voting is not harm reduction

For the vast majority of issues, there's no difference between the political parties. They are all the parties of business, climate destruction, deportation, incarceration, police, surveillance, drone strikes, sacred site desecration, *et cetera*. By getting you to believe that there is a lesser of two evils, the state dampens your desire for abolishing it, because you are meant to believe that things will be worse if you don't vote and support a political party. Look at the fact that the George Floyd Rebellion occurred under Trump, where liberals, and progressives, and leftists didn't get what they want, where the harm was supposedly greater, than under Biden, where those same people lie dormant, accepting the lesser evil world as a blessed reprieve.

Power corrupts even the best

Even the most genuine politician, or most trustworthy political party, becomes corrupted by the political process. They come

to see themselves as better, superior, more important than those who elected them. To retain their position, they learn to play the game, cater to the wealthy, orient toward the socially and economically powerful, go with what is popular. They must compromise, not speak too ardently, not take strong positions.

References

Voting is cringe. It does not please me. It's boring. It's lame. I'd rather be in the goon cave.

"How a person acts only from himself, and asks after nothing else, Christians have depicted in "God." He acts as it pleases him. And the foolish human being, who could do exactly the same thing, is instead supposed to act as it pleases God. —If one says, God also proceeds according to eternal laws, that is fitting for me too, since I also can't leave my skin, but have my law in my whole nature, i.e., in myself…I also love human beings, not just a few individuals, but every one. But I love them with the awareness of egoism; I love them because love makes me happy, I love because love is natural to me, it pleases me. I know no "commandment of love." (Stirner, The Unique and Its Property)

"We need, not for people to be less selfish, but for us to be better at being selfish in the most effective way, together. For that, they need to understand themselves and society better — to desire better, to enlarge their perceptions of the genuinely possible, and to appreciate the real institutional (and ideological) impediments to realizing their real desires. By "real desires" I don't mean "what I want people to want," I mean what they really want, severally and together, as arrived at — as Benbow so presciently put it — by unconstrained, general, unhurried reflection, "to get rid of our ignorant impatience, and to learn what it is we do want." And also what we "do not need" (Bookchin 1977: 307)." (Bob Black, Anarchy After Leftism)

tive vote into a voting bloc that aligns with whatever settler party, politician, or law that appears to do less harm isn't a strategy to exercise political power, it's Stockholm syndrome." (Indigenous Action, Voting is Not Harm Reduction)

"And yet the suspicion lurks that, as it seemed to another poet, Oscar Wilde, "democracy means simply the bludgeoning of the people, by the people, and for the people. It has been found out."…The democracy which was then universally despised is what is now called direct democracy, government *by* the people *over* the people. "People" in "by the people" meant the citizens: a minority consisting of some of the adult males. "People" in "over the people" meant everybody. The citizenry assembled at intervals to wield state power by majority vote…Democracy does not as is promised, give everyone the right to influence the decisions affecting her, because a person who voted on the losing side had no influence on that decision…Under American democracy, it has long been well-known, even to the U.S. Supreme Court in 1938, that "discrete and insular minorities" are at a political disadvantage beyond the mere fact (which is disadvantage enough) that they are minorities. And the smaller the constituency, the more likely it is that many interests may be represented "by numbers so small as to be less than the minimum necessary for defense of those interests in any setting."" (Bob Black, Debunking Democracy)

Voting is not harm reduction.

For the vast majority of issues, there's no difference between the political parties. They are all the parties of business, climate destruction, deportation, incarceration, police, surveillance, drone strikes, sacred site desecration, *et cetera*. By getting you to believe that there is a lesser of two evils, the state dampens your desire for abolishing it, because you are meant to believe that things will be worse if you don't vote and support a political party. Look at the fact that the George Floyd Rebellion occurred under Trump, where

"Voting is a cruel and vicious ritual whereupon the winning group of voters are able to force their party's agenda and the personalities of their leaders on everyone else for half a decade, and then safely ignore the needs of people outside their group, either because they were outvoted or chose not to vote at all (sometimes under the threat of imprisonment in countries where it's illegal to not cast a ballot)…Both representative and direct democracy (like the Brexit vote in the UK) are used to force minorities to submit to the whims of the majority, and by proxy, to the whims of the ruling class who control the majority through the intricate systems of propaganda they construct with their vast looted wealth." (Ziq, Why Do Anarchists Burn Ballot Boxes?)

""Democracy,"observed Karl Kraus, "means the permission to be everybody's slave." Its claimed superiority over other oppressive arrangements remains, after centuries of philosophy and propaganda, obscure. That an abstract, evanescent majority — of *whom*, is one of the central mysteries of democratic dogma — could ever claim more than the right to rule itself has always been a gross impertinence. Yet liberals and the leftists who tail them assure us, with a straight face, that those who participate in elections thereby agree to abide by the outcome, whereas those who abstain have no right to complain since, after all, they could have voted. This ritual, they assure us, magically *expands* the scope of legitimate authority, *i.e.*, cop violence. Beware of democrats offering rights! Such sophistries stand out in their proper satirical light when, year in and year out, the majority refuses to rule. What do I care if some cabal of ambitious opportunists declares me a member of some club I don't want to join? Majority rule, shaky enough as a "right," is openly malignant when imposed by a minority as a *duty*. Ralph "Darth" Nader is only a step ahead of his fellow paternalists in calling for compulsory voting." (Bob Black, Electing Not to Vote)

"Since the idea of U.S. "democracy" is majority rule, barring an extreme population surge, Indigenous voters will always be at the mercy "of good intentioned" political allies. Consolidating the Na-

You can't do everything.

If you believe in voting, then you should want your candidates to win. Are you going to spend time trying to get people elected (canvassing, organizing, running for office), watching the polls, being enrapt in the sports-like competition between the two business parties before, during, and after the election, or are you going to spend time on projects that don't depend on the outcome of an election (direct action, mutual aid, etc)?

"Since no one can do everything in this world, one must choose one's own line of conduct. There is always an element of contradiction between minor improvements, the satisfaction of immediate needs and the struggle for a society which is really better than the existing one. Those who want to devote themselves to the erection of public lavatories and drinking fountains where there is a need for them, or who use their energies for the construction of a road, or the establishment of a municipal school, or for the passing of some minor law to protect workers or to get rid of a brutal policeman, do well, perhaps, to use the ballot paper in favour of this or that influential personage. But then — since one wants to be "practical" one must go the whole hog — so, rather than wait for the victory of the opposition party, rather than vote for the more kindred party, it is worth taking a short cut and support the dominant party, and serve the government already in office, and become the agent of the Prefect or the Mayor. And in fact the neo-converts we have in mind did not in fact propose voting for the most "progressive" party, but for the one that had the greater chance of being elected .. But in that case where does it all end? …" (Malatesta, Reformism)

"We lobby everywhere for deliberate abstention, not bothered by whether or not it might favor this candidate or that. For us, it is not the candidate that counts, insofar as we do not see the point of having "good deputies"; what matters is some indication of people's frame of mind; and of the thousand and one bizarre frames of mind in which the voter may be found, the best is the one that

opens his eyes to the pointlessness and dangers of returning someone to Parliament, and the one that impels him to work directly for what he wants through joining forces with all whose wishes are the same as his." (Malatesta, A Few Words to Bring the Controversy to an End)

"You can give money to a charity organization, or you can start your own chapter of Food Not Bombs and feed yourself and other hungry people at once. You can write an angry letter to the editor of a magazine that doesn't provide good coverage of the subjects you consider important, or you can start your own magazine. You can vote for a mayor who promises to start a new program to help the homeless, or you can squat unused buildings and open them up as free housing for anyone in need. You can write your Congressman, asking him to oppose a law that would allow corporations to cut down old-growth forests — but if they still pass that law, you can go to the forests and stop the cutting by sitting in trees, blockading roads, and monkey-wrenching machinery…Conflicts over voting often distract from the real issues at hand, as people get caught up in the drama of one party against another, one candidate against another, one agenda against another. With direct action, the issues themselves are raised, addressed specifically, and often resolved…Ultimately, there's no reason the strategies of voting and direct action can't both be applied together. One does not cancel the other out. The problem is that so many people think of voting as their primary way of exerting political and social power that a disproportionate amount of time and energy is focused on electoral affairs while other opportunities to make change go to waste. For months and months preceding every election, everyone argues about the voting issue, what candidates to vote for or whether to vote at all, when voting itself takes less than an hour. Vote or don't, but get on with it! Remember all the other ways you can make your voice heard. This book is for people who are ready to get some more practice using them." (Crimethinc, Recipes for Disaster)

monetary benefit — the preservation of their own privilege." (Ziq, Why Do Anarchists Burn Ballot Boxes?)

"The proposition of "harm reduction" in the context of voting means something entirely different from those organizing to address substance use issues. The assertion is that "since this political system isn't going away, we'll support politicians and laws that may do less harm…If voting is the democratic participation in our own oppression, voting as harm reduction is a politics that keeps us at the mercy of our oppressors…" (Indigenous Action, Voting is Not Harm Reduction)

"There are times of course when more radical reformist governments are elected (in other countries if not as yet in Ireland). These included Spain in 1936 and the post war British Labour government. The function of these governments however was to lead the working class away from the road to social revolution, to suggest the same gains could be made through parliament." (Flood, If Voting Could Change Anything… It Would be Illegal)

Voting reinforces false interdependence.

Why should I have a say over what others do, particularly hundreds of millions of people who I will never meet? And why should those people have a say over what I do? There's both an implied authority over others and implied duty to others that comes with voting. Most people would not actively consent to these authorities and duties if they were made explicit. The way these authorities and duties are administered is through a collective decision-making state apparatus rather than direct interpersonal contact, alienating people from real interdependence, which requires interaction. If we can't agree, we should not affiliate, rather than just going along with what others want. Forced collective decision-making, subjecting oneself to the tyranny of the majority or consensus, inhibits this autonomy. Minorities have little or no influence in democracy.

They're in their clubs and at their select dinners, and they don't even trouble to come and have a look at you until the next election." (Malatesta, Vote? What For?)

Harm reduction is harmful.

Voting as harm reduction does more harm than good. Accepting reforms through voting makes people settle for a partial goal; it is a concession. From this position of compromise, the state entrenches its position, and it becomes more difficult to push further, for voters fear losing their partial gains. Accepting harm reduction also divides the movement, because some will be satisfied with the crumbs, while others want it all (see the split at the ZAD). Harm reduction also assumes that the harm (the government) cannot be removed entirely, which is an argument that there can be no anarchy.

"Every time I hear them use the phrase "harm reduction", it honestly makes my skin crawl. The absolute fucking nerve of these people to conflate safe injection sites and needle exchanges (you know, actual harm reduction) with helping put career war criminals and sex pests like Joe Biden and Hillary Clinton in office. But I digress. Self-proclaimed lesser-evilists insist they only vote to get the nice tyrants elected, who promise they'll smile at the screaming brown kids as they snatch them from their parents arms and cram them into cages, but the honest voters will openly tell you what they're really concerned with when they vote is things that affect them more directly… Both candidates will snatch kids, genocide indigenous people to take their land and water, bomb schools and hospitals, imprison entire generations of black people and drone-strike goat herders across the world to seize their oil, sure. But one of the candidates promises they'll give them a break on their student loan debt, or on their taxes, or on the price of health care, and that's what they really mean by harm reduction — their personal

"In "A Day in the Life of a Socialist Citizen," Michael Walzer (1970: ch. 11) sent up muscular, direct democracy before Bookchin publicized his version of it. Walzer's point of departure was what Marx and Engels wrote in The German Ideology about how the post-revolutionary communist citizen is a fully realized, all-sided person who "hunts in the morning, fishes in the afternoon, rears cattle in the evening, and plays the critic after dinner" without ever being confined to any or all of these social roles (ibid.: 229). Bookchin has endorsed this vision (1989: 192, 195). Sounds good, but a muscular municipal socialist has further demands on his time:..Before hunting in the morning, this unalienated man of the future is likely to attend a meeting of the Council on Animal Life, where he will be required to vote on important matters relating to the stocking of the forests. The meeting will probably not end much before noon, for among the many-sided citizens there will always be a lively interest even in highly technical problems. Immediately after lunch, a special session of the Fishermen's Council will be called to protest the maximum catch recently voted by the Regional Planning Commission, and the Marxist man will participate eagerly in these debates, even postponing a scheduled discussion of some contradictory theses on cattle-rearing. Indeed he will probably love argument far better than hunting, fishing, or rearing cattle. The debates will go on so long that the citizens will have to rush through dinner in order to assume their role as critics. Then off they will go to meetings of study groups, clubs, editorial boards, and political parties where criticism will be carried on long into the night (ibid.: 229–230)…In other words, "Socialism means the rule of the men with the most evenings to spare" (ibid.: 235). Walzer is far from being my favorite thinker (Black 1985), but what he sketched here is as much paradigm as parody. It scarcely exaggerates and in no way contradicts Rousseau's — his fellow Genevan Calvin's — ascetic republican civism, which in turn is disturbingly close to Bookchin's muscular, moralistic municipalism." (Bob Black, Anarchy After Leftism)

"Though I am an anarchist, I have never held a dogmatic position against voting. What is most important is what you do with all the other thousands of hours in a year. The reason I now caution people against engaging with electoral politics is that I have seen the consequences, a clear pattern from the Corbyn campaign in the UK to the Sanders campaign in the US to the austerity referendum in Greece to the independence referendum in Catalunya to the MAS victory in Bolivia to the constitutional referendum in Chile. Aside from the immense energies and resources wasted in these campaigns to sway a vote rather than to build infrastructure for communities in struggle, there is a clear psychological result: every single time, when they lost, and even more so if they won, resilient movements that supported these electoral campaigns with a justification of urgency or gradual change became jaded, burnt out, and demobilized in the aftermath. It is as though the symbolic act of voting carries a very real psychological weight, as though we were depositing our hopes in a machine that will inevitably disappoint us. Political parties are unscrupulous in how they will cannibalize social movements and suck them dry. Even in countries where political engagement is most easy to justify on grounds of mere survival, for example where the old government has direct ties to the military and death squads, alliance with a more progressive government constitutes a dead end, with initial improvements giving way, the pendulum swinging back to old, bloody habits, in a matter of years. The truce is at best a temporary affair. Context is more important than dogma, and people's survival is paramount. Those who live in a situation where their very survival is threatened shouldn't have to worry about the uninformed disapproval of those for whom the danger is less urgent, but they also shouldn't have any illusions about the inevitable trajectory of state power. This is why building autonomous power and understanding that all the institutions of colonial society endanger us is so important." (Peter Gelderloos, The Solutions are Already Here)

our ideas. We must seek to get all the people, or different sections of the people, to make demands, and impose itself and take for itself all the improvements and freedoms that it desires as and when it reaches the state of wanting them, and the power to demand them; and in always propagating all aspects of our programme, and always struggling for its complete realisation, we must push the people to want always more and to increase its pressures, until it has achieved complete emancipation." (Malatesta, An Anarchist Programme)

"Positive illusions of the future continue to be an obstruction to liberation. The myth that as linear time progresses, society progresses to be more equitable, easy to live in, i.e. better, is pervasive in society writ large, as well as in utopian left thinking. Within this notion lies a sense of hope that motivates organizations to hold the rally or the leftist to vote for the democrat, the idea that they will be on the right side of history in a future that will eventually come to pass. The rejection of this futurity is present in many contemporary anarchist critiques and calls to action. The notion that nothing is guaranteed and the only semblance of time one has any ability to act in is the now is a powerful notion in inspiring people to act." (Anonymous, Acrid Black Smoke)

"Good councillors and good M.P.'s? We've heard that for a long time. But you'd have to be deaf, dumb, and blind not to notice it's the same stooges that always get in. Oh, it's wonderful to hear them when they're after votes at election time. They pat you on the back, ask after the wife and kids, kiss the baby, promise you railways, bridges, work, cheap bread, less taxes, higher wages, protection – absolutely everything! And once they get in, they're no better than anyone else. Goodbye promises! The wife and kids may starve, there's no more or less work than before, the whole town can be falling to pieces for all they care. They've other things to think about than your troubles! Then a few years later they start the ballyhoo again. It doesn't matter what colour the party is: they're all the same. As soon as they're elected, they forget all about you.

instrument of popular rule rather than the oligarchy it really is. This is why even totalitarian states like Russia under Stalin had elections. Embedded within all electoral campaigns is the myth that "the people" control the state through voting. This is implied & assumed by all election campaigns because it if wasn't true then the campaign for that candidate would be pointless." (Morpheus, Elections are a Scam)

Voting requires waiting and hoping.

You wait for the elections to roll around, even though things are urgent. You vote, then you wait to see who is elected, then you wait for them to come into office, then you hope that they will pass the laws that you want. If things don't work out, you wait for the next election, and repeat the process.

"Voting is only possible when election time comes around. Direct action can be applied whenever one sees fit. Voting is only useful for addressing topics that are currently on the political agendas of candidates, while direct action can be applied in every aspect of your life, in every part of the world you live in. Direct action is a more efficient use of resources than voting, campaigning, or canvassing: an individual can accomplish with one dollar a goal that would cost a collective ten dollars, a non-governmental organization a hundred dollars, a corporation a thousand dollars, and the State Department ten thousand dollars." (Crimethinc, Recipes for Disaster)

"We must not wait to achieve anarchy, in the meantime limiting ourselves to simple propaganda. Were we to do so we would soon exhaust our field of action; that is, we would have converted all those who in the existing environment are susceptible to understand and accept our ideas, and our subsequent propaganda would fall on sterile ground; or if environmental transformations brought out new popular groupings capable of receiving new ideas, this would happen without our participation, and thus would prejudice

"The left-wing voter will always have culpability for the system they willingly participate in upholding, especially when you take notice of just how many hours of their life they pour into sermonizing for their preferred party on Facebook, Reddit and Twitter." (Ziq, Why Do Anarchists Burn Ballot Boxes?)

"Unfortunately the delusional thinking behind voting crops up in leftist inclinations in general. They want to build giant organizations, giant armies, with individuals all acting in low return-on-investment ways, in hopes of aggregate impact. They don't search for opportunities of high impact individual direct action. Thus, leftists gravitate towards "you have an obligation to show up for a meaningless protest" type stuff. Sure the demonstration only had a thousand something people milling about in hidden embarrassment, but if it had a hundred thousand then maybe they could storm some building and change something! If you just keep voting, keep attending demonstrations, keep buying lottery tickets, then maybe just maybe…Collective action like voting often requires top-down enforcement and/or precommitments and sacrifice of continual individual agency so that you all march lockstep into action… Our projects are generally geared to slope upwards in impact rather than being all or nothings, so that every additional bit of energy or time people invest directly accomplishes something real, like feeding the homeless or arming trans women." (Gillis, The Case Against Voting)

"In addition, elections can help neutralize resistance movements by getting disgruntled individuals to channel their efforts into the election, instead of more effective means of resistance. Since electoral campaigns are an ineffective means of changing policy, all the labor and resources put into election campaigns are wasted. Potential rebellion is thus diverted into a dead end where it will not hurt the system. Boycotting elections doesn't necessarily change things, but participating in elections (and especially in election campaigns) changes things for the worse by legitimizing the state and wasting resources. A vote for anyone

is a vote for capitalist "democracy" and to strengthen the state." (Morpheus, Elections are a Scam)

Voting transforms the voter (praxis).

Engaging in representational politics (voting) transforms the voter. It changes the voter's consciousness to believe in governance and its hierarchical social relations. Voting prevents the voter from developing capacities outside the political, the skills and social relationships needed to flourish without government. Rather than engaging directly with their lives, their friends, new autonomous projects, voting gets people to expect the government to do things for them. Voting weakens, disempowers, and disarms the voter, and reinforces social and economic relationships suitable to being governed.

"Anarchists held that society was constituted by human beings with particular forms of consciousness engaging in activity — exercising capacities to satisfy motivational drives — and in so doing simultaneously transforming themselves and the world around them. For example, when workers go on strike a number of fundamental transformations can occur. Workers can develop their capacities by learning to engage in direct action and self-direct their lives; acquire new motivational drives such as the desire to stand up to their boss or become a dues paying member of a union; and transform their forms of consciousness, by which I mean the particular ways in which they experience, conceptualise and understand the world, such as coming to view their boss as a class enemy or realising that to improve their situation they have to collectively organise with other workers. Through engaging in such activity workers not only transform themselves but also develop new social relations. They form bonds of mutual support and solidarity with fellow workers while they transform the social conditions under which they live, such as earning better wages or making their boss afraid of them. This is often called the theory of praxis or practice and it is one of

putting their "team" in control of the state…I will not voluntarily legitimize the system that takes everything from me and you and gives it to the ruling class, who then funnel their vast spoils into the propaganda machine, directing it to select the next geriatric rapist to sit in the big chair." (Ziq, Why Do Anarchists Burn Ballot Boxes?)

"Anyone who studies the subject can see that a vote is pure theater. Most people don't hold unswerving, idealistic convictions. The result of any vote will depend primarily on the news coverage of the prior week, contextual factors that determine which demographics vote in higher numbers, and the framing of the choice being voted on. It is common knowledge among pollsters that if you ask the same question two different ways, you get two different results. And no democracy anywhere allows people to determine which questions are asked, and how they are asked. Giving a single, easy-to-manipulate vote the power to create a whole new state and therefore a new way the public relates to their government doesn't make sense unless we accept that the purpose of a vote isn't to give the public real input, but to create a convincing symbol of public input." (Gelderloos, Catalan Independence and the Crisis of Democracy)

"We get told that "If you don't vote, you have no right to complain about the outcome", but we consider the opposite to be true. It is those who have voted, who have agreed to the rules, and agreed to be governed by the winners who can't complain. It is those, like us, who don't participate, who have the right to complain about the outcome more than anyone else." (Aotearoa Workers Solidarity Movement Urcuchillay, Why We Don't Vote)

"Although elections do not secure popular control over the state, they do help secure state control over the populace. Voting is a ritual that reinforces obedience to state authority. It creates the illusion that "the people" control the state, thereby masking elite rule. That illusion makes rebellion against the state less likely because it is seen as a legitimate institution and as an

state elections, which is why voter turnout is much lower there. State elections make much less difference than national elections, which is why voter turnout is lower there too. But it's low at all levels, and what they all have in common is that nobody's individual vote ever determines the outcome. To vote is only a way of pledging allegiance to the democratic state. That's why anarchists who understand anarchism don't vote…Whatever democracy might theoretically mean, in the real world, "democracy is a euphemism for capitalism… Every time an anarchist says, 'I believe in democracy,' here is a little fairy somewhere that falls down dead": When anarchists declare themselves to be democrats for respectability's sake, so they can get on better at university research departments, so they can tap into a shared and honourable left tradition, so they can participate in the global forum, when they crown their decomposition by saying, "we're democrats true, we're true democrats, participatory democrats," they ought not to be surprised at how enthusiastic democracy is to return the compliment, and of course extract its price." (Bob Black, Chomsky on the Nod)

"Voting consolidates the power of a whole society in the hands of a few individuals; through sheer force of habit, not to speak of other methods of enforcement, everyone else is kept in a position of dependence. In direct action, people utilize their own resources and capabilities, discovering in the process what these are and how much they can accomplish." (Crimethinc, Recipes for Disaster)

"The voters do the bidding of their rulers more than any time in history — they hate and fear the things they're told to hate and fear, support and buy the things they're told to support and buy. Few of them are able to resist the constant stream of propaganda expertly manufactured to feed delicious dopamine to the human brain…The ballot box serves to convince voters that the atrocities their government commits against them and citizens of other nations is being done with their full approval, so as to smother any potential resistance from people who might not have been so accepting of the state's misdeeds if they hadn't gotten to personally participate in

the many theoretical commitments that anarchists and Marx have in common." (Zoe Baker, Means and Ends)

"But it is not enough to desire something; if one really wants it adequate means must be used to secure it. And these means are not arbitrary, but instead cannot but be conditioned by the ends we aspire to and by the circumstances in which the struggle takes place, for if we ignore the choice of means we would achieve other ends, possibly diametrically opposed to those we aspire to, and this would be the obvious and inevitable consequence of our choice of means. Whoever sets out on the highroad and takes a wrong turning does not go where he intends to go but where the road leads him…Between man and his social environment there is a reciprocal action. Men make society what it is and society makes men what they are, and the result is therefore a kind of vicious circle. To transform society men must be changed, and to transform men, society must be changed. Poverty brutalises man, and to abolish poverty men must have a social conscience and determination. Slavery teaches men to be slaves, and to free oneself from slavery there is a need for men who aspire to liberty. Ignorance has the effect of making men unaware of the causes of their misfortunes as well as the means of overcoming them, and to do away with ignorance people must have the time and the means to educate themselves. Governments accustom people to submit to the Law and to believe that Law is essential to society; and to abolish government men must be convinced of the uselessness and the harmfulness of government." (Malatesta, An Anarchist Programme)

"It has often been charged against federalism that it divides the forces and cripples the strength of organised resistance, and, very significantly, it has been just the representative of the political labour parties and of the trade unions under their influence who have kept repeating this charge to the point of nausea. But here, too, the facts of life have spoken more clearly than any theory. There was no country in the world where the whole labour movement was so completely centralised and the technique of or-

ganisation developed to such extreme perfection as in Germany before Hitler's accession to power. A powerful bureaucratic apparatus covered the whole country and determined every political and economic expression of the organised workers. In the very last elections the Social Democratic and Communist parties united over twelve million voters for their candidates. But after Hitler seized power six million organised workers did not raise a finger to avert the catastrophe which had plunged Germany into the abyss, and which in a few months beat their organisation completely to pieces. But in Spain, where Anarcho-Syndicalism had maintained its hold upon organised labour from the days of the First International, and by untiring libertarian propaganda and sharp fighting had trained it to resistance, it was the powerful C.N.T. which by the boldness of its action frustrated the criminal plans of Franco and his numerous helpers at home and abroad, and by their heroic example spurred the Spanish workers and peasants to the battle against Fascism — a fact which Franco himself has been compelled to acknowledge. Without the heroic resistance of the Anarcho-Syndicalist labour unions the Fascist reactions would in a few weeks have dominated the whole country." (Rudolph Rocker, Anarcho-Syndicalism Theory and Practice)

"The best known example of this is perhaps the removal of the democratically elected Allende government in Chile in 1972. They had attempted to bring in a limited package of reforms and nationalise some of the larger American industries. The result was a military coup backed by the CIA. The workers in Chile were politically disarmed by their reliance on a small group of elected deputies to liberate them. There was little organised resistance to the military and in the immediate aftermath over 30,000 militants were executed and 1,000,000 fled into exile." (Flood, If Voting Could Change Anything… It Would be Illegal)

"You've the nerve to call it propaganda? Haven't you noticed what your propaganda leads to? You've deserted our socialist programme, joined the ranks of the worst exploiters of the workers,

get out or invent for my neighbors. These men act as if they believed that they could safely slide down a hill a little way—or a good way—and would surely come to a place, by and by, where they could begin to slide up again. This is expediency, or choosing that course which offers the slightest obstacles to the feet, that is, a down-hill one. But there is no such thing as accomplishing a righteous reform by the use of "expediency." There is no such thing as sliding up hill. In morals, the only sliders are backsliders…Will mankind never learn that policy is not morality,—that it never secures any moral right, but considers merely what is expedient?" (Thoreau, Slavery in Massachusetts)

"Voting is a lottery: if a candidate doesn't get elected, then the energy his constituency put into supporting him is wasted, as the power they were hoping he would exercise for them goes to someone else. With direct action, one can be certain that one's work will offer results. In marked contrast to every kind of petitioning, direct action secures resources -experience, contacts in the community, the grudging respect of adversaries — that others can never take away." (Crimethinc, Recipes for Disaster)

Voting consents to entrenchment and consolidation of power.

Voting consents to placing power in the hands of a minority of the powerful and opulent through their representatives in government. When they do things you don't like, who are you to disagree? You consented to being dominated by them.

"The majority of American adults don't vote, which makes them better anarchists than Chomsky is. He says: "On local issues I almost always vote. Usually the local elections make some kind of difference, beyond that it is …" (241) – the sentence trails off, since it could hardly be completed without saying something foolish. United States government is decentralized in theory, but centralized in practice. Local elections make much less difference than

right; but I am not vitally concerned that that right should prevail. I am willing to leave it to the majority. Its obligation, therefore, never exceeds that of expediency. Even voting for the right is doing nothing for it. It is only expressing to men feebly your desire that it should prevail. A wise man will not leave the right to the mercy of chance, nor wish it to prevail through the power of the majority. There is but little virtue in the action of masses of men. When the majority shall at length vote for the abolition of slavery, it will be because they are indifferent to slavery, or because there is but little slavery left to be abolished by their vote. They will then be the only slaves. Only his vote can hasten the abolition of slavery who asserts his own freedom by his vote…I cast my vote, but I am not vitally concerned that that right should prevail. I am willing to leave it to the majority. Its obligation, therefore, never exceeds that of expediency." (Thoreau, Civil Disobedience)

"The judges and lawyers,—simply as such, I mean,—and all men of expediency, try this case by a very low and incompetent standard. They consider, not whether the Fugitive Slave Law is right, but whether it is what they call constitutional. Is virtue constitutional, or vice? Is equity constitutional, or iniquity? In important moral and vital questions, like this, it is just as impertinent to ask whether a law is constitutional or not, as to ask whether it is profitable or not. They persist in being the servants of the worst of men, and not the servants of humanity. The question is, not whether you or your grandfather, seventy years ago, did not enter into an agreement to serve the Devil, and that service is not accordingly now due; but whether you will not now, for once and at last, serve God,—in spite of your own past recreancy, or that of your ancestor,—by obeying that eternal and only just Constitution, which He, and not any Jefferson or Adams, has written in your being…The amount of it is, if the majority vote the Devil to be God, the minority will live and behave accordingly,—and obey the successfu1 candidate, trusting that, some time or other, by some Speaker's casting-vote, perhaps, they may reinstate God. This is the highest principle I can

gone in with the political imposters who make a noise to gain power! You bring trouble within the socialist ranks, and your headquarters fights its own rank-and-file while it fraternises with the Tories. You've forgotten all about revolution – you're only thinking of electing Jones and Brown and when you talk about change, you've no intentions of doing anything drastic. Oh, the road to Westminster doesn't lead to the social revolution! All you've done with your propaganda is to tempt some people who might have been decent socialists to go to Parliament and turn M.P.'s. You've created the parliamentary illusion that blinds any sight of revolution. You've discredited socialism, as everyone looks on the socialist party as a part of the government they suspect and despise. It's the end of everyone who looks to getting in power." (Malatesta, Vote? What For?)

Unity of means and ends.

Using the state (voting) to achieve a society without government will strengthen, rather than weaken, government.

"A communist society can only emerge through a social revolution that abolishes capitalism and therefore will have to be created by the people who presently live under capitalism. Given this, in order to achieve a communist society the majority of the population has to engage in activities during the struggle against capitalism itself that transform them into people who want to and are able to self-direct their lives and their community through local councils and federations of councils. If this does not happen, then communism will not be created. This is because for communism to exist real people must establish and reproduce it day after day through their own activity…Revolutionaries therefore have to use means that are constituted by forms of practice that will actually transform individuals into the kinds of people who will be able to and want to create the end goal of communism. If revolutionaries make the mistake of using the wrong or inappropriate means

then they will produce people who will create a different society to one they initially intended. To quote Malatesta: it is not enough to desire something; if one really wants it adequate means must be used to secure it. And these means are not arbitrary, but instead cannot but be conditioned by the ends we aspire to and by the circumstances in which the struggle takes place, for if we ignore the choice of means we would achieve other ends, possibly diametrically opposed to those we aspire to, and this would be the obvious and inevitable consequence of our choice of means. Whoever sets out on the highroad and takes a wrong turning does not go where he intends to go but where the road leads him…For anarchists, the state not only had negative effects on those who wielded its power. It would also harm the vast numbers of people who were subject to it by making them engage in forms of practice that did not develop them into the kinds of people needed for a communist society. This is because instead of learning how to self-organize their lives effectively workers would be subject to the power of a ruling minority and so be forced to do as instructed. They would learn to obey and defer to their superiors rather than to think and act for themselves. Instead of learning how to associate with others as equals they would learn to put those in power on a pedestal and venerate them in just the same way that people under capitalism learn to hero worship so-called 'captains of industry' or political figureheads like the British royal family. As Bakunin wrote, "power corrupts those invested with it just as much as those compelled to submit to it…In Statism and Anarchy Bakunin declared that although state socialists claim that "this state yoke, this dictatorship, is a necessary transitional device for achieving the total liberation of the people; anarchy, or freedom, is the goal, and the state, or dictatorship the means", they ignore that "no dictatorship can have any other objective than to perpetuate itself, and that it can engender and nurture only slavery in the people who endure it."[11] The workers' state would claim to be a dictatorship of the proletariat but would in reality, according to Malatesta, "prove to

be the dictatorship of 'Party' over people, and of a handful of men over 'Party.'" (Zoe Baker, Means and Ends)

"When a gay group protests lack of police protection, by making an alliance with police to form a gay task force, they ain't making a stand against the system they are joining it. Putting more power in the hands of those who attack them for being what they are in the first place. Those women's organizations with members with underpaid Black, Puerto Rican and Mexican maids, who decided to vote differently when the Equal Rights Amendment was defeated, can't be called Left, just as Blacks mobilizing to field a presidential candidate arn't left. Left is the land and means of production in the hands of the masses and Right is land and the means of production in the hands of a few pigs. As i am writing this it occurs to me that it sounds rigid, but dealing with land and the means of production in a different manner calls for a different system. This is not to say that we should sabotage anti-nuke… organizations that call themselves "left"… but we should keep the basics constantly in debates and we should establish the working definition." (Balagoon, Letters from Prison)

Policy is not morality.

If you are a moralist, you should do what is morally correct regardless of what a government says. This makes the outcome of the election, and in turn voting, irrelevant: If the outcome fits what I consider moral, then government will do what I would be doing anyway, and if it does not, then government merely stands in the way of what I will do. To do otherwise, to vote and sit on one's hands, is to treat the most important moral questions as games of chance.

"All voting is a sort of gaming, like checkers or backgammon, with a slight moral tinge to it, a playing with right and wrong, with moral questions; and betting naturally accompanies it. The character of the voters is not staked. I cast my vote, perchance, as I think